

CENTRAL COMMITTEE POLITICAL REPORT

Our strategic tasks – now and over the next 10 years

If our liberation struggle was so expensive, how has it become so cheap? Is the NDR in an interregnum? What is to be done?

Revolution means to have a sense of history; it is changing everything that must be changed; it is full equality and freedom; it is being treated and treating others like human beings; it is achieving emancipation by ourselves and through our own efforts; it is challenging powerful dominant forces from within and without the social and national milieu; it is defending the values in which we believe at the cost of any sacrifice; it is modesty, selflessness, altruism, solidarity and heroism; it is fighting with courage, intelligence and realism; it is never lying or violating ethical principles; it is a profound conviction that there is no power in the world that can crush the power of truth and ideas. Revolution means unity; it is independence, it is fighting for our dreams of justice for Cuba and for the world, which is the foundation of our patriotism, our socialism and our internationalism. – Fidel Castro, May Day 2000 speech¹

Is the NDR in an interregnum?

The fundamental structural challenge facing the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) is our capitalist economy. The key constraint is that of seeking to drive radical socio-economic transformation on a terrain of a highly monopolised, semi-colonial capitalist trajectory. It is a semi-

colonial economic trajectory with stubborn structural features of unemployment, inequality and poverty. It is important that for us as the SACP this must be the point of departure in our analyses of the challenges facing our revolution. But it is also a capitalist economy with its own unique and peculiar historical features whose evolution and manifestations must be properly grasped in all the phases of the evolution of our struggle.

It was primarily in response to this reality that the ANC Mangaung Conference came up with a strategic programme to drive a second, more radical, phase of our transition. However, for a variety of reasons, the ANC and the Alliance have failed to give coherent content and direction to this 'second phase'. The SACP is the only organisation that made a serious attempt on this score and sought to engage its own structures and the Alliance on its paper *Going to the Root*. However this was also not very successful and there seemed to be little appetite for engagement on this matter. Why?

The SACP has spent most of this year trying to answer the above and other related questions, including the all-important question of what is to be done. Perhaps let us (re)-pose some of these questions as part of laying a foundation for political discussion in this Augmented Central Committee (ACC). Most importantly, discussions on these matters must also lay a basis for some of our Congress discussion documents. In particular, we have said that one of the key discussions in the run up to our Congress, and one of the outcomes from the 14th Congress itself, must be the identification of key strategic tasks of the SACP in the next 10 years.

If the NDR is indeed in an interregnum, what are the reasons for this and what is to be done? What are the character and some of the defining features of this interregnum? Is this interregnum not also a reflection of a possible (deepening of the) rupture in the (multiclass) con-

sensus (since 1994) around the NDR itself? And is the rupture in the consensus of an ideological or organisational character? Or is it both? If the SACP is correct in arguing that the 3 August electoral losses could be a reflection of the ANC's inability to win hegemony over and lead the main motive forces of our revolution, could this perhaps be a reflection of the rupture in the consensus amongst those motive forces? Let us seek to answer this latter question a bit more closely and in some detail, as part of laying a basis for what is to be done.

If our observation is correct that all we did at the ANC's Polokwane Conference was to deal with the symptom and not the fundamental causes of the problems besetting our movement, what then are these fundamental causes? To pursue the idea that we possibly are seeing a rupture in the consensus around the National Democratic Revolution, we need to go back to the past history of our liberation movement to illustrate how this consensus has been forged over decades, as well as where things could have started going wrong. But an historical overview also gives us another vantage point to look at the challenges we have and the way ahead.

One of the most significant developments of the 20th century in South Africa was the formation of the ANC in 1912. This was the primary foundation stone, which was to later become a significant factor in building a consensus around the NDR. Perhaps the ANC's biggest historical achievement was its ability to unite the African people across tribal divisions. This is an achievement we dare not underestimate as many progressive and promising revolutions faltered on the altar of tribal and ethnic divisions.

The unity of the African majority still remains a solid foundation for building a new, united non-racial nation. Without undermining the huge and impressive achievements of the Cuban revolution, I was however struck by the fact that one of the contributory factors to the

unity of the Cuban people is a single language – Spanish, from Havana to Santiago de Cuba! The ANC had a much more complex task on this score, uniting different language and cultural groups and truly making itself ‘Umbutho weSizwe’ building a consensus by uniting African people (As one liberation struggle song said: uMZulu, uMXhosa, Mo-Sotho hlanganani!). The task of uniting the African people remains an important one in refashioning and cementing the consensus around the NDR, and the SACP must also play its vanguard role in this regard in relation to especially the unity of the working class, and forging a progressive middle class committed to build a developmental public service in particular.

Much as the formation of the SACP was a significant development for the working class of our country to build its own political vanguard, it was the CPSA’s 1929 Native Republic Thesis calling for the establishment of a native republic as a stage towards a socialist republic that really grounded the Party strategically within the South African context. This was the first such explicit articulation of the relationship between the struggle for liberation of black people, and a socialist republic. It was a far reaching resolution that laid the foundation for the emergence of the very early origins of the idea of majority rule with an essentially African government and social formation but with democratic rights for all. It was an important contribution to the forging of a revolutionary consensus.

The Native Republic Thesis also gave very explicit tasks to the Communist Party in relation to the ‘national movements’:

“The Party should pay particular attention to the embryonic national organisations among the natives, such as the African National Congress. The Party, while retaining its full independence, should participate in these organisations, should seek to broaden and extend their activity. Our aim should be to transform the ANC into a fighting na-

tionalist revolutionary organisation against the white bourgeoisie and the British imperialists, based upon the trade unions, peasant organisations, etc, developing systematically the leadership of the workers and the Communist Party in this organisation. The development of a national-revolutionary movement of the toilers of South Africa against the white bourgeoisie and British imperialism, constitutes one of the major tasks of the Communist Party of South Africa”.

However the decade of the 1920s in South Africa was characterised by significant mass urban and rural struggles led by the Industrial Commercial Union (ICU), which though it was a trade union in form, acted more as a broader militant and mass movement combining the struggles of workers, peasants, and particular labour tenants being evicted from white farms. In many respects the ICU in the 1920s played a much more effective and militant, broad movement role than the ANC at the time.

The national democratic revolutionary consensus was tested and forged through trying times and in the crucible of struggles and big debates and disagreements both within and between the ANC and the SACP. The disagreements were paramount immediately after the adoption of this thesis and the SACP’s decision to work with and build the ANC. In the 1930s, both the ANC and the SACP were weakened, partly because of the debilitating nature of the debates around a way forward in the struggle against white colonial rule. Ideological debates within the SACP were also preoccupied by analysis of class struggles in Europe and the rise of fascism in the 1930s, especially in Germany and Italy.

It was the election of a new leadership core of the SACP around Moses Kotane in 1939 that created conditions for taking the SACP out of its debilitating internal factionalist battles, whose intentions centred on the clarion call contained in the famous ‘Cradock Letter’, written by Kotane in 1934. This laid the basis for the revitalisation of a campaign-

ing SACP in the 1940s on a number of fronts, including intensified work in building a progressive and militant trade union movement, but also beginning to take up struggles affecting particularly African communities, reaching out and working with Indian and Coloured communities as well.

The new Kotane leadership, perhaps on evaluating a decade of trying to work with the ANC, decided to encourage African party cadres to join the ANC directly as members and also stand to be elected for leadership positions in the ANC. Perhaps this was out of realisation that seeking to influence the ANC only from outside was not yielding the desired effect of radicalising the ANC. This formed another crucial dimension of the consensus around the NDR, the principle of dual membership by members of the SACP, not only in the trade union movement but also in the ANC itself. Although this was not a new practice in the SACP, it was now elevated to a higher level in relation to the ANC, and therefore an important development in the history of our revolution.

Of particular importance is how the Party, over and above its work in building and supporting progressive trade unions, was also involved in the building of what it referred to at the time as national movements, primarily the ANC. In the 1940s the CPSA continued its traditions of developing internal capacity for political education, using some of the cadres that had gone to the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s for political education and exposure to socialist construction. The SACP revitalised its 1920s practice of night schools for the political education of its cadres on a larger scale in the 1940s. This later became a key element in the NDR - the education of the cadres of the movement as a whole beyond just the Communist Party, especially during the 30 years of illegality of both the ANC and the SACP.

It was no accident therefore that the apartheid regime, on ascending to power in 1948, targeted the Communist Party as its most immediate

enemy and banned it in 1950 through the Suppression of Communism Act. It was also the strongest component of the fledgling liberation movement at the time. The CPSA's mass and militant activism and struggles during its golden decade of the 1940s had a direct effect on the ANC, which had largely still remained an organisation of petitions. One of the mass actions that had a huge impact on the ANC and the movement as a whole was the great 1946 mineworkers' strike led by communist leader JB Marks and other communists. The Transvaal and Natal Indian Congress passive resistance campaigns against group area removals, which were also led by Communists, were another important contribution to a more active and mass campaigning ANC.

The radical programme adopted by the ANC and deriving from the ANC Youth League's 1949 programme of action, was directly influenced by the Party led activism of the 1940s.

The 1950s was a particularly significant decade in defining and shaping the direction of the NDR, as well as deepening the consensus, through separate, but complementary, mass activism as well as joint programmes of action – all leading to the formalisation of the Congress Alliance committed to non-racialism, both in active struggle and in principle for building a new South African society. These were key components in cementing the consensus around the unfolding democratic revolution. During the 1950s in particular there were also important rural struggles, although the evolving democratic revolution in South Africa was largely led by the struggles of the urban working class.

One of the most important developments of the 1950s was the adoption of the Freedom Charter. Though the idea of collective demands of the majority of South Africans came from the ANC, the Congress of the People deliberately involved the entire Congress movement. The Charter in many ways laid the foundation for a broader Congress consensus about the demands of the South African people, with a conceptualisa-

tion of an alternative South African society.

A major advance in defining a theoretical and programmatic articulation of the consensus around the NDR is contained in the SACP's 1962 Programme, the South African Road to Freedom. This programme achieved a number of things simultaneously:

- Most importantly, it sought to resolve a nagging question that had not been adequately addressed since 1929 as to what was the main character of the South Africa's capitalist political economy. The 1962 programme conceptualised this as Colonialism of a Special Type. The CST concept wove together three interrelated strands of national liberation struggle which had been implicit but un-developed in the 1929 Native Republic thesis:
- From the mid-1930s (and moving away from the Native Republic Thesis) the CPSA had tended to conceptualise racial oppression in SA as a version of fascism. (See, for instance, Brian Bunting's book on the emergence of the National Party – *The Rise of the South African Reich*). This strategic perspective corresponded to the Communist International's 1935 shift of emphasis away from an anti-imperialist focus to popular fronts against emerging fascism in Europe. The SACP's 1962 CST thesis returned our strategic focus much more centrally and appropriately to the colonial nature of national oppression in SA.
- Closely related to the above the CST thesis helped to clarify the relationship between the national and class struggles in South Africa, by embedding national oppression within the systemic relations of production of South African monopoly capital. This had been a central issue that had remained theoretically vague within SACP perspectives in the previous decades (see, for instance, Jack and Ray Simons' attempt in *Race, Class and Colour* – where "capitalism" is seen as the "economic base" and "national oppression" as an "ideological

superstructure”, an “ideological” hangover from the “frontier” past and in contradiction with the capitalist economic base).

Understanding SA’s pre-1994 political economy as CST also located our national liberation struggle within an internationalist struggle against imperialism in a new, post-1945 era. SA’s late-19th century capitalist industrial revolution had established SA as a semi-peripheral capitalist economy within the imperialist chain. A South African NDR, it was now affirmed, had to be a struggle for national sovereignty and not an old-style national struggle led by an emerging national bourgeoisie. The 1962 programme helped shape the direction of our struggle, and firmly embedded the concept of a NDR. The programme also significantly shaped the first Strategy and Tactics of the ANC as adopted in Morogoro in 1969. Were it not for the Morogoro Conference and its resolutions, the ANC and the liberation movement as a whole would not have been able to give leadership to the resurgence of worker and youth struggles in the early to the mid 1970s. It probably would have been as moribund as the PAC, unable to use this ferment to intensify the offensive against the apartheid regime. The organisation of our struggle in the 1980s into the four key pillars proved to be one of the most important strategic and organisational factors in pushing back the apartheid regime (the armed struggle, the underground, the mass struggles and the international isolation of the apartheid regime).

The semi-insurrectionary period of the 1980s, marked by a fusion of workers, youth and community struggles introduced an important dimension into the NDR, that of building people’s power from below as a crucial driver in the NDR.

The 1994 democratic breakthrough and the consensus

Without by any means suggesting that there were no internal debates

around the direction of the NDR prior to 1994, it was nevertheless after the 1994 democratic breakthrough that some serious discord began to develop over the consensus around the NDR.

The first deviation came only two years after the democratic breakthrough with an imposition of a neo-liberal economic policy. It was a neo-liberal deviation from which our revolution has not fully recovered from, and in fact has left very deep scars. It was an imposition declared non-negotiable, in a decision made by government and later imposed, without any discussion, as ANC policy.

The neo-liberal restructuring was also accompanied by a serious attempt after the ANC's 2002 National Conference to restructure the ANC itself, away from being a national liberation movement into a narrow electoralist parliamentary party, undermining the movement character of the ANC. This attempt was largely influenced by the "Third Way" political current associated with Blair, Schroeder and Bill Clinton – in effect the re-engineering of Labour/Social Democratic/Democratic parties away from their centre-left welfare orientation towards managerialist parties implementing neo-liberalism with a "human face", side-lining trade unions and shifting public social wage interventions into user-pay, privatised, debt-financed provision (the privatisation of Keynesianism).

The nature of a post-apartheid NDR and the appropriate organisational form of a sustained national liberation movement were already pre-figured in the debates of the 1980s, in, amongst other things, the differences around the character of MK. Those associated with Slovo, Hani and Comrade Mzala argued for an MK that fused with the rolling-mass semi-insurrectionary struggles of the 1980s, others around Joe Modise saw MK much more as the nucleus of a future conventional army to be built up outside of the country. These strategic differences within the ANC/MK were never resolved, but represented

two different perspectives on the future – the one appreciating the necessity for ongoing organs of popular power in a post-apartheid South Africa, the other having a much more state-centred approach to a future SA.

Similar divergences were detectable in the debate over whether to sustain the MDM structures associated with the UDF, or their collapse into centralised organisations. The latter view prevailed with serious and persisting problems in the civic, women's and youth sectors.

From 1993 these strategic and organisational differences were also played out around the interpretation of the RDP: the Mbeki-ites stressing the “people-centred”, “top-down” delivery state character of the RDP (but not its equally explicit “people-driven” aspirations). After 1994 the SACP and the ANC national secretariat sought to develop localised MDM-type RDP Councils, but the 1996 Class Project marginalised both the RDP and any mass-based organisational mobilisation around it. .

A central plank of the Mbeki-ite drive to reconfigure the NLM and ANC as a state-centric, bureaucratic, narrowly electoralist formation was to marginalise the SACP in particular and to transform Cosatu into a narrow trade union formation. There were venomous attacks by both President Mandela and Mbeki on the SACP at our 8th Congress in 1998. Secondly, though Cde Mandela was having his own political irritations with the SACP, (and later apologised for the imposition of Gear), Cde Mbeki was driven by a desire to sideline and ultimately weaken the SACP and destroy the Alliance.

During Cde Mbeki's Presidency of the ANC there was large scale factionalist marginalisation of the SACP and Cosatu as well as those who were not part of a circle closer to him. What also started developing was a system of patronage characterised by factionalist deployment into key positions in the state. The Black Economic Empowerment process,

which was not only narrow and elitist, but also got captured by these patronage networks thus benefitting those closer to the Mbeki faction to the exclusion of 'outsiders'.

Although the ANC had always had different internal tendencies and sometimes groupings, but it was during Mbeki's era that provincially based factionalism that drove the national behaviour of the ANC begun to take hold. And there was also a close relationship between factionalism and patronage, as factions were less based on ideological differences, but increasingly based on access to resources and means of accumulation.

It was also after the 1994 democratic breakthrough that there was serious neglect and decline of both mass mobilisation and cadre development. These two are usually the first casualties of factionalism, as a cadre independently capable of mobilising the people on an ongoing basis and also further developed through political education is not easily malleable to factionalist manipulation. It is not in the interests of factionalists to educate cadres and to undertake ongoing mass mobilisation.

In Polokwane the ANC removed Mbeki, but never really tackled these underlying problems. In fact, from the Port Elizabeth National General Council (NGC) in 2000 till the 2014 NGC, if not earlier in the Mahikeng Conference in 1997, all the ANC political and organisational reports had already identified many of the problems besetting the organisation. However, the main problem is that there has been very little, if any, action that has been taken to address these problems, such that they have now possibly mutated to the extent of threatening to swallow the organisation itself. For example, the problem of factionalism and slates has long been identified, but each conference and NGC is followed by many branch meetings, regional and provincial conferences beset by the same problems. For instance, right after the last NGC, all ANC or League conferences held have been characterised by slate

politics with no action from any of the ANC structures, especially the National Executive Committee.

If our liberation struggle was so expensive, why has it become so cheap?

Our Central Committee discussion document published in the last edition of *The African Communist* outlines, fairly comprehensively the serious problems besetting the ANC, our movement and revolution in the current period:

- Money-driven factionalism has become so entrenched in the movement such that in some regions it is leading to intra-ANC assassinations in the lead up to the recent August 3 local government elections. Over 20 such assassinations occurred, illustrating the extent to which large parts of our movement have been corrupted;
- The deepening grip of the parasitic bourgeoisie on parts of the state, especially in the SOEs, is exemplified by the recent revelation that the head of the Gupta family is now the seventh richest person in South Africa! The Guptas have not made their wealth through expanding and developing the forces of production, they have made their wealth through parasitic milking of public resources. If there has been any denial of the reality of the corporate capture of the state for purposes of private accumulation from both inside and outside our movement, Atul Gupta's ranking in the top ten wealthiest South Africans is the decisive counter proof!
- The corporate capture of much of the ANC's institutional machinery has become endemic, manifesting itself in, amongst other things, brazen manipulation of internal elections, membership lists, deployments, etc;
- Not since 2007 have we seen such signs of division amongst national leadership and wilful bypassing of ANC and Cabinet mandated positions on matters relating to the SABC, SAA, digital migration,

nuclear energy and the so-called Zwane task team on the banks. There is a climate of recklessness and a 'don't care' attitude in many of our parastatals, including violations of the rule of law and basic governance protocols.

However, the untransformed semi-colonial economic trajectory is the principal foundation from which corruption derives. Given the high levels of poverty and unemployment, access to a political position in the movement becomes access to some form of 'employment' and access to resources. The difficulty in entering the highly monopolistic economy, unless assisted by government, and lack of other economic opportunities outside the mainstream economy reinforces competition and manipulation of processes to access ANC and therefore governmental positions. This constitutes the objective reasons for corruption in our movement and society. Therefore a more radical transformation and de-monopolisation of our economy is an essential condition to fight corruption and factionalism in our state and organisations.

Therefore the interregnum is principally driven by a state of protracted stagnation in both our economy and a paralysed national leadership of the ANC, incapable of confronting corruption and especially unable to drive a more radical phase of our transition through confronting both monopoly capital and the parasitic bourgeoisie that threatens to take over our movement.

The situation would have been much worse with a likely decline into a failed state situation if, post-2009, a left axis in the state, led by the SACP, had not used the post-Polokwane opening, particularly in the first Zuma administration (2009-2014), to drive a range of important radical transformative programmes and, on the other hand, to block or at the very least expose and delay some of the worst corporate capture initiatives.

It is very important that we collectively and self-critically assess the

performance of leading SACP personalities in the executive and legislatures over the 2009 to 2016 period – not least because part of the EFF/Numsa as well as mainstream media anti-Party line is that SACP personalities have been sitting comfortably but captured in senior government positions (and, so the argument goes, the only reason why the Party is now speaking up against Zuma is that we have “fallen out”, or fear losing positions in 2019).

Among the key SACP-led, left axis initiatives have been:

A significant impact on overall economic policy orientation

In particular, the left axis in government post-2009 has succeeded in shifting government from a neo-liberal posture on state owned companies and trade policy to a developmental policy largely embodied in the New Growth Path with explicit jobs goals. Two million new jobs have been created since the adoption of the NGP in 2010, despite a global economic crisis that reduced demand for SA minerals.

Labour Policy – the left axis helped to shift labour policy from an emerging strategy that favoured dismantling key protections of workers to strengthened labour laws on labour-broking and short-term contracts, expanded coverage through UIF for workers who became unemployed, minimum wages for farm and domestic workers and a new minimum wage is being developed.

Competition policy – the left axis in government shifted competition policy away from an administrative processing of mergers to an active tool to combat collusion and cartels (in key sectors like fertilisers, bread, poultry, construction). The shift also saw a globally innovative approach to imposing employment and other developmental conditions when companies sought to buy or sell another company (Walmart, Coca-Cola, AB InBev, Clicks). Other mergers were blocked (Vodacom and Neotel) and abuse of market power was acted against

(Sasol, Media 24). Monopoly capital abuses in other sectors have been investigated (private health, gas, grocery retail); and measures to criminalise cartels and collusion have been implemented.

Trade policy – Post-2009 SA has emerged as a global leader in developing progressive trade policy from a developing country perspective. We have made trade policy a tool of industrialisation and shifted away from the free-trade model, introducing employment as a key criteria in tariff considerations; re-oriented trade with the global South (STAT), and increased exports to the rest of Africa.

In the face of the Global Recession the left axis in government developed and implemented measures to shift the economy out of recession in 2009, including a fund to retrain workers instead of re-trenching them; and a fund for companies in distress (R6,1-billion).

Infrastructure development – the left axis played the leading role in increasing the scale and scope of infrastructure investment with additional funding, a new coordinating structure (the Presidential Infrastructure Co-ordinating Council); and an integrated approach to delivery (I8 SIPs); linking local manufacture of components to infrastructure projects (buses, wind-towers, solar units, etc.)

Industrial funding – the left axis in government was central to driving increased industrial funding by the IDC by more than 100%. A major focus has been the funding of green energy projects, and a focus on a black (productive) industrialists programme.

Localisation – the left axis in government has driven localisation programs, among them the return of taxi-production to SA (the units were previously imported); the development of a new designation of products for the localisation of all state procurement (clothing, textiles and footwear, furniture, canned foods, etc).

Sector development – the left axis in government shifted the clothing, textile and footwear sector from a sector in rapid decline, losing

20 000 jobs a year to a stable sector maintaining employment of around 150 000 workers; supported food-processing and beverages through measures on trade, competition and industrial funding, resulting in a growth of employment in the sector; and rescued Scaw Metals when Anglo sold it; introduced a pricing mechanism to support local use of scrap metal; supported beneficiation, particularly through resourcing the development of fuel cell technology.

The spatial economy – overcoming CST geography

Pre-2009 it was the SACP that led the way in calling for a strategic focus on transforming the spatial political economy of apartheid – in particular through integrated urban policy, linking transport planning with housing, and transforming the Housing Department into a Human Settlement Department. While progress has been uneven since, at least these strategic priorities are now generally recognised.

Post-school education and training

Since 2009 there has been a massive expansion of student numbers and of public spending on university and vocational training. The huge expansion of student numbers, a major achievement in itself, has of course brought its own challenges (notably around affordability).

Towards a social/solidarity economy and the right to work

Over the 2009-2014 and the present administration, the left-axis in government has helped to shift strategic thinking away from the mistaken idea of a “well-performing” “first economy” and a laggard “second economy”, towards a different approach to “informality”, SMMEs, co-ops, and public employment programs – conceptualising these as elements of a potentially de-linked social or solidarity economy in which use values (assets and services) for working class and popular

strata and communities, rather than profit-maximisation and integration into monopoly-dominated “value chains” is the strategic priority. SA’s globally innovative public employment programmes in which the public sector is the employer of last resort have now expanded to over 1-million work opportunities a year, or some 220 000 in employment per day.

This is an incomplete list of left-axis strategic interventions in government since 2009 (we need to expand it and further assess it in preparation for our 2017 national congress).

The question will be asked, however: If the SACP-led left axis within government was relatively successful in the above interventions, why are we still suffering from crisis levels of inequality, poverty and unemployment?

There are two fundamental factors:

- The 2009, post-Polokwane relative breakthrough for the SACP and left axis at a government level, coincided with the impact on our domestic economy of the global capitalist crisis and particularly the dramatic end of the commodity super-cycle. The contra-factual is extremely relevant in this regard: If the post-2009 left axis in government had not been relatively successful in driving the above strategic initiatives the situation would certainly have been much worse. Unlike Brazil, for instance, our economy is not in recession. Unlike Australia, we have not lost our auto manufacturing sector. And despite crisis-levels of unemployment, it is our public employment programmes that have consistently seen job growth, as with this week’s announcement of the quarterly employment statistics which show “community and social services” (ie: public employment) once more contributing the majority of new jobs (78 000).
- While the 2007 anti-neoliberal ANC revolt at Polokwane created significant new space for SACP cadres in government deployments

in President Zuma's first administration (2009-14) and, perhaps to a lesser extent in the current second Zuma administration, there was always a deliberate attempt to check and counter-balance SACP influence in government. In essence, there was an attempt to triangulate and therefore contain the three major tendencies within the movement:

- The left axis;
- The comprador "new tendency" (with whom the left axis had struck a marriage of convenience at Polokwane); and
- The significant remnants of the 1996 class project who had not left for business, or departed to COPE.

In the 2009-14 administration, while SACP (and ex-Cosatu) deployees were located in key economic portfolios, Treasury remained firmly within the legacy of the Mbeki 1996 class project era. The SACP had campaigned for a central planning capacity, this was half-conceded (but in the shape of a non-governmental National Planning Commission), and it was equally handed over to the 1996 class project. Meanwhile key SOEs, and most of the social sector ministries went to "new tendency", and often parasitic bourgeois elements. As for the security cluster the SACP was entirely excluded from there.

The left axis-led interventions noted above were, therefore, often constrained by counter-balancing interventions, which meant that a thorough-going radical second phase of the NDR, capable of sustained transformative momentum was compromised.

Contrariwise, we should also note, in this context, that many SACP comrades deployed into key portfolios - for example, in communications (both in the executive and in parliament), or in energy put up tough resistance to corporate capture and were eventually demoted or forced to resign. However, if they had not fought against corporate parasitism, even larger scale looting and degeneration into failed state

status would have been accelerated.

Once again, it is important to assert and develop these analyses to counter the claim that SACP cadres in government have been passive, comfortable prisoners of a “hyena state”, and that the Party “has only woken up recently” for fear of losing positions.

It is also important to note a shift in the alignment of forces between the first Zuma administration 2009-14, and the current post-2014 administration. This latter administration has been marked by even more aggressive and reckless interventions by the Gupta-captured network, which often conducts itself as a shadowy, parallel state outside of collective cabinet discipline and above any answerability to Parliament or the ANC. Part of this recklessness is attributable to a sense that things are not assured for them beyond 2019; and part of the recklessness is the desperation of those for whom the net is closing in as scandals pile up.

The growing recklessness of this parasitic tendency, and its attacks particularly on Treasury, has opened up better possibilities for a re-calibrated relationship between the left-axis and Treasury. The sacking of former Finance Minister Nene and attacks on SARS have further isolated this tendency from a wide range of middle-of-the-road ANC NEC members, ANC stalwarts and ex-MK combatants.

But the reckless arrogance of the parasitic tendency in government has also been given some leeway by the weaknesses of Cosatu and its inevitable inward-looking preoccupation over the past two or three years.

And, finally, while the SACP-led axis in government has done relatively well over the past seven years, the SACP’s mass campaigning work has not reached the levels of the early 2000s and, for instance, the original Financial Sector Campaign. Going forward we need to ensure a better balance between our mass work and our leadership role within the state.

Integrally linked to the above is perhaps another reality that the organisational form taken by the Alliance since 1994 has exhausted itself and is no longer able to be the bedrock upon which to drive a second phase of our transition. We need to ask bigger questions of whether all of our Alliances formations' organisational methods aren't outdated. For example why is our movement's leadership and authority absent in the current student protests or unable to provide leadership on these.

The key strategic tasks of the SACP in the NDR over the next 10 years

The key strategic task over the next ten years is the mobilisation of the principal motive forces of the revolution to drive a radical second phase of our NDR, with the SACP at the centre of this task. The main vehicle for this must be a rebuilding of a militant working class-led popular movement made up of all those forces with an interest in a radicalised programme of transformation to benefit workers and poor of our country.

A radical working class movement

For instance over the past 20 years the progressive trade union movement, especially Cosatu, and particularly industrial unions, have been fighting rearguard defensive battles, essentially against the neo-liberal restructuring of the workplace and our economy, linked to the effects of Gear and the globalised developments of capitalism, Perhaps it is in the nature of the trade union movement to fight defensive battles against retrenchments, casualisation, labour brokers, privatisation, e-Tolls etc. These are by no means small struggles. But until the working class (within and beyond the trade unions) is integrally connected to a wider national democratic mobilisation and is organised politically as the working class and class force for itself, it won't as a class be able to turn defensive struggles (largely affecting the formally employed) into

an offensive for radical economic transformation and the overall development of our country.

In the current situation facing our own country, no other class force is able to rise and provide leadership towards radical economic transformation of our country. South African monopoly capital is incapable of providing such leadership as its primary focus, both in the short and long term, is narrow profit maximisation and indeed expatriation of investments and assets. The BEE class that emerged out of narrow BEE is equally unable to lead because of its compradorial dependence on monopoly capital, largely in the mining and financial sectors, and also now facing narrowing opportunities in the light of a relative decline in the mining industry and deepening monopolisation in the financial sector.

The parasitic bourgeoisie is also unable to provide any leadership in driving economic transformation as its primary goal remains that of looting the state as a means of accumulation. Unions also have intrinsic limitations. They are organised in the work-place, they tend to represent the more formally employed with marginalised sectors of the proletariat (farm-workers, domestic workers, the casualised, the under-employed and the unemployed) largely unorganised. This is one of the reasons why Numsa's attempts to launch a vanguard workers' party and also an MDM-style United Front have been a failure (at least so far). Building a radical and militant working class movement will require in the first instance the deepening and protection of our relationship with Cosatu. In addition the SACP needs to pay close attention to rebuilding Cosatu's industrial unions and expanding into unorganised areas.

However it is going to be important for the SACP to extend its work and engagements beyond Cosatu and seek to reach out to all organised workers. This will also help to contribute towards the one country one federation aspiration. However building a single union federation is not

a board room exercise but requires the mobilisation of workers around common concrete demands. For example there are common aspirations of workers across federations and unions like fighting against labour brokers and casualisation, the transformation of the financial sector to invest in job creating activities, the industrialisation of our country and growing the productive sectors of our economy, including building worker co-operatives. It is specific demands and campaigns around these issues that the SACP should seek to encourage broader worker campaigning and co-operation as part of building a militant working class movement.

Another important matter around which to mobilise organised workers is that of fighting the parasitic bourgeoisie and rolling back its capture of the state and state owned entities. This is a campaign that has not been taken up by any of the unions both inside and outside Cosatu, and yet it poses one of the most serious threats to transformation and defending workers' gains. Incidentally those interested in the corporate capture of the state are targeting the capture of the very unions organising the areas or sectors of the state they are interested in.

To achieve the above requires that we seriously revitalise, resource and strengthen the SACP's Trade Union Commission and that it must report at least twice a year to the Central Committee, one of which must be at the Augmented Central Committee. The trade union commission must also have similar structures created at provincial and district levels. This Commission must develop a nationally co-ordinated programme to strengthen our bilateral relations with Cosatu and all its affiliates, as well as to reach out to all organised workers and their unions, especially those likely to accept a minimum programme of action to defend workers. This must also include intensified work amongst those unions that have left Cosatu for example Numsa and Fawu, while supporting the building of Limusa and other Cosatu initiatives to or-

ganise farm workers and other workers in the food industry.

Building a working class-led popular movement

One of the observations we made in the analysis of the 3 August local elections was that the ANC (or even the Alliance) has lost contact with the principal motive forces of the NDR. Largely this is as a result of ANC structures, particularly branches and regions that are inward looking and focused on who is to be a councillor or a delegate to this or that conference. In the process the ANC has lost leadership of communities and capacity to address their needs.

The starting point for rebuilding a popular movement as part of the mobilisation of the motive forces of the NDR must start with engagement and joint activities with working class economic forms of organisation outside of the workplace. This must include the mobilisation of stokvels, burial societies, co-operatives, as well as building civic and residential organisations to take up community issues. Localised struggles against evictions and the predatory behaviour of mashonisas are very important campaigns to pick up at local level. The best way to do this is not to drive these programmes from head office, other than overseeing and co-ordination, but to strengthen our branches and districts to reach out to these structures and take up their issues at local levels. Also it is important that we do not rush to create new structures as such, but start by reaching out, through programmes of action, to already existing institutions and organisations, with many facing enormous challenges and stresses.

The SACP must simultaneously seek to build a front of these popular forces at the same time as it seeks to rebuild the strength of the ANC. In fact it is by building such a popular front that we can contribute to building an ANC and SACP that are rooted amongst the people. The SACP must deliberately seek to play a leading role in building this

front, as there are doubts on how capable the ANC is to successfully confront gate-keeping and corruption of its own internal processes. It is these very crooked practices that are now so entrenched in ANC structures that it turns many people against it, making it unable to lead a range of progressive forces in various localities. Such a popular front must both be in the ANC but independent at the same time.

Key and strategic policy interventions

There are a number of new policy areas and interventions that the SACP needs to pay particular attention to and also prepare some short position papers as we go to our Congress. These are not a replacement on our focus on the five priority areas of our revolution:

Building a layer of progressive and patriotic professionals and managers in the state

Every successful revolution requires the fostering and development of a patriotic, and often revolutionary, layer of professionals and public sector managers, capable of driving a progressive agenda to realise the objectives of such a revolution. But similarly every class society requires its own professional and managerial cadre to advance its own class interests in society.

For the SACP, it is therefore in our deepest interests that much as we seek to advance the revolutionary interests of the workers and poor of our country, we must simultaneously pay close attention to the struggle for a production of a patriotic cadre of professionals that are loyal to, and advancing the interests of, the consolidation of a NDR, with an inclination towards advancing the interests of the working class. This is not a task for some coming future, but a struggle that must be waged in the here and now.

It is precisely because every society, capitalist or socialist, and what-

ever its phase or stage of its struggle, requires such a professional cadre, and that is why such a professional or managerial cadre is a contested terrain. It was Marx and Engels who first pointed out that the middle and professional classes are a wavering class, subject to contestation by the principal class forces in a capitalist society, the bourgeoisie and the working class.

In every class and/or national liberation struggle, there is always a simultaneous struggle for the loyalty and winning over of the middle strata. In our own immediate struggle against the apartheid regime, there was a serious contest over especially the loyalties of the black middle strata, including the managerial and professional components of such strata.

Part of the struggle between the apartheid regime and the national liberation movement was that over winning the loyalties of these strata. This was a struggle over the loyalties of the, albeit relatively small, corporate middle stratum, the bantustan professional petty bourgeoisie and the professional layers of teachers, nurses and other professionals. Part of the shifting of the balance of forces in favour of the working class and the national liberation movement had a lot to do with the winning over by the liberation movement of significant layers of the professional and other sections of the black middle strata.

However, the defeat of the apartheid regime in 1994 did not mark an end to the class contestations in South African society, including the contestations over the emergent middle strata after 1994. This struggle in essence now involved the struggle over the loyalties of the black middle and professional strata between principally the capitalist class and the working class. It is a struggle that has simultaneously been fought between the emergent class forces in control of the post-1994 state, the dominant capitalist classes and the working class.

One of the most important class developments since 1994 is that

there has arisen anew, an old class force – that of a parasitic bourgeoisie that is largely dependent on its hold over the state in order to pursue its accumulation interests. This is not a new class stratum, but it has now taken a new form that has relative autonomy from both the established capitalist classes and the working class. Its power derives from its hold over the (new post apartheid) state apparatuses. Its autonomy derives from this class stratum's privileged relationship to government and significant sections of the state. Perhaps the most significant aspect about this parasitic bourgeoisie is that it both has dependence but also relative autonomy from the sections of established capitalist classes. It is its relative autonomy that is giving it power (and audacity) to try and dislodge the hold of the old monopoly capitalist classes from the state.

Let us take a brief detour to give a closer analysis of the parasitic bourgeoisie and the Gupta phenomenon in order to properly understand the threat posed by this to the production of a loyal layer of a professional and managerial cadre for the public sector. Capitalism has always created favourable conditions for speculation and corruption existing alongside mainstream accumulation. The primacy of private profit over social needs inherent in the system lies at the heart of this.

The current era of capitalist globalisation has massively increased opportunities for such tendencies. Greater mobility, financialisation, the proliferation of tax havens and greater opportunities for use of electronic transfers have opened up many more opportunities for speculative capitalists. And that is why all of a sudden the FICA Bill has become such a contested matter in our case.

The Gupta family can be identified as representing one form of speculative capitalism, in this case are highly dependent on corrupting decision makers within government and public entities. From what has emerged of their basic modus operandi, it is to exploit 'political

influence' to gain access to resources, licences, contracts and tenders on favourable terms and then to divert large amounts of the profits accumulated to off-shore tax havens and accounts.

The activities and practices of such capitalist bootleggers can in no way be seen as any kind of progressive bulwark against the monopoly capitalist owners and controllers of the means of production, that remain the main adversary of the working class.

Gupta-style 'empowerment' focuses on enrichment of selected individuals who can fuel their own corrupt enrichment and transfer of loot off-shore. Decisions taken by such 'captured' individuals are expected to favour the specific interests of this group against the broader interests of transformation.

It is within the above context that many professionals and managers would be targeted by this rent-seeking behaviour thus corrupting them and undermining our goals to build a developmental state. The trade union leadership operating in parts of government and the public sector that are of interests to the parasitic bourgeoisie is also targeted for 'capture'. Another strategy of luring the sections of the professional and part of contesting is through offers of BEE type shareholding in certain companies.

Another challenge in this area relates to the fact that our civil service is not yet fully integrated from its past components from the central apartheid state and the Bantustans. In parts of our civil service elements from the old Bantustan services seem to be rising to occupy very key strategic positions in a manner that could pose a serious threat to the functionality of government and the state.

It is therefore important for the SACP to build capacity to drive a campaign for a clean and patriotic managerial and professional cadre in the public service. It is in the deepest interests of the workers and the poor that we have such a cadre.

To achieve the above will require, *inter alia*, that we forge a very close relationship with the public sector unions, primarily inside Cosatu, but also extend our engagements with other potentially progressive public sector unions that are outside Cosatu, in line with the strategic perspectives advanced earlier.

The rise of populism; the political dimensions of the neo-liberal crisis – a “crisis of representation”

The current capitalist crisis began as a financial crisis in the US in 2007/8. It has now assumed both a global and a multi-faceted character, marked in particular by sluggish economic growth through most of the developed capitalist world. One of the latest manifestations of this multi-faceted crisis is in the political domain, bringing uncertainty and disruption to a prevailing liberal electoral politics. The mainstream global media are describing it as a “crisis of representation”.

The neo-liberal state and party political space was constructed in response to capitalism’s last major crisis in the mid-1970s. It was piloted by Thatcher and Reagan and sought to roll-back the Keynesian, welfare state that had flourished in much of the developed capitalist world after 1945. It was characterised by a managerial, technicist political elite, zealously implementing what came to be known as the Washington consensus. It was consolidated by both centre-right and subsequently centre-left “Third Way” politicians like Blair, Schroeder and Bill Clinton (whose “Third Way” politics Thabo Mbeki admired and sought to emulate here in SA).

A popular and often successful electoral rejection of this politics occurred through the 2000s, sweeping notably through many countries in Latin America. The 2007 Polokwane events and the 2009 incoming ANC-administration, with its own internal dynamics and contradictions, can be understood as part, if an uneven part, of the electoral

wave of rejection of neo-liberal politics in many countries of the global South.

Now in the advanced capitalist world itself, we are witnessing a major electoral backlash against the neo-liberal Washington consensus. Part of this backlash has been led by left-leaning political projects (Bernie Sanders who would have likely out-performed Hillary Clinton against Trump; Jeremy Corbyn who has had to engineer a grassroots rebellion against his own Labour Party parliamentary caucus; Syriza in Greece; Podemos in Spain; Die Linke in Germany; etc.).

The rise of right-wing populism in Europe and the US

However, for the moment through much of Europe and in the US, it is “anti-establishment” right-wing populists who have succeeded most significantly in mobilising popular discontent. This popular discontent is grounded in the increasing precariousness of employment, high levels of household debt, and deepening social inequality for large swathes of the working class and middle strata. The immediate economic policy target of these right-wing populist movements is neo-liberal “free trade” policies being pursued in the context of the “disruptive” introduction of digitised technologies (the so-called fourth industrial revolution) and “winner takes all” markets. These right-wing populist movements also mobilise on the basis of racist anti-immigrant and anti-minorities sentiment.

In the developed world the main social base for this right-wing populism are vulnerable “middle class” strata (including sections of the industrial working class). Study after study has shown that in contrast to the several decades prior, inter-generational “downward social” mobility has become the norm as established white and blue collar jobs are displaced by a combination of the introduction of new digitised technologies and moving of production processes to lower waged

economies in the third world. Right wing in form and substance, the predominant form of political populism in the developed world rejects globalisation, regionalism and free trade, as well as demonstrating hostility towards established politics and “the establishment”, while also being deeply racist and xenophobic. The rise of Donald Trump and Brexit can both be recognised as having this hall mark, with the potential election of National Front leader, Marine Le Pen, as President of France being the next major test. Should Le Pen be elected (and this is now no longer unthinkable) and should she follow through with her pledge to take France out of the European Union, that would probably be “game over” for the EU.

Two variants of populism South Africa

The global crisis of neo-liberalism is spawning other forms of populism in the developing world. In South Africa this crisis is super-imposed upon and further aggravates persisting crisis levels of racialised poverty, inequality and unemployment. The 1996 class project led by President/Deputy President Mbeki was essentially an attempt to stabilise a post-apartheid South Africa on the basis of neo-liberal macro-economic policies (including trade liberalisation, globalisation, and privatisation) that would, supposedly, produce sustained growth.

The leading social force in this project was to be a new, ANC political-managerialist stratum closely linked to a rising BEE generation of “patriotic capitalists”. Sustained capitalist growth, it was reasoned, would enable significant redistributive measures to be “delivered” by the managerialist elite to a broader populace and a welcoming electorate – thus enabling the electoral reproduction of the ANC-aligned political stratum in government.

This whole strategy has largely imploded economically, socially, ideologically and politically. The inherent weaknesses of a neo-liberal

strategic agenda for South Africa have now been compounded by the global neo-liberal capitalist crisis.

While we cannot simplistically read our South African reality off a global time-line, it is not entirely accidental that the Polokwane events, the 2008 recall of Mbeki, and the 2009 election of the first Zuma-led administration, all occur at the moment that the current global crisis of neo-liberalism begins to unfold.

Between 1994 and c.2007 there were “winners” and relative “losers”.

The key beneficiaries of the first post-apartheid decade included:

- Established monopoly capital which was able to return to relative profitability, thanks to Gear-related trade and financial liberalisation, de-conglomeration, mergers and acquisitions and disinvestment.
- A first wave of BEE beneficiaries, accommodated within the ranks of established monopoly capital through the “social contract” between the new political elite and established monopoly capital
- A new political/public sector managerial stratum closely linked to the ANC-led Alliance. This stratum also included a trade union leadership whose career trajectory tended to carry them into the political/public sector managerial stratum, or into business.
- Professionals and middle strata from “minorities” – despite gripes about affirmative action measures, generally professionals and middle strata from “minorities” that had enjoyed relative educational and training possibilities prior to 1994 (whites, obviously, but also much of the Indian community, and a professional and artisanal stratum in the Coloured community). These social strata either sustained their relatively privileged positions (in the case of white middle strata), or enjoyed new possibilities and advancements. These strata have increasingly been mobilised into liberal centrist politics, notably through the DA.

Despite massive formal sector retrenchments (particularly in mining and agriculture), generally most South Africans saw some improvement in their lives post-1994, largely due to major redistributive efforts (social grants, RDP housing, water and electricity connections, the significant expansion and formal de-racialisation of higher education and training). However, in the absence of radical progressive, structural transformation, particularly of the productive economy, and in the absence of a radical land reform programme, these re-distributive efforts:

Are often overwhelmed by the size of the social needs, and are fiscally impossible to expand indefinitely;

Which, in turn, has provoked a deep sense of frustrated expectation with the resulting disillusion, social alienation, fragmented communities and anger, not least among a post-apartheid black youth generation.

The failure to drive inclusive, employment-creating growth has resulted in a mass of the relatively excluded – the rural poor, particularly women; informal sectors; low-skilled workers (rock-drill operators, for instance); unemployed youth; black lower middle-strata whose suburban ambitions are precariously maintained through high-levels of house-hold debt; the “missing middle”, etc.

This is the terrain on which all manner of regressive social phenomena have sprouted – violence against women and children; xenophobia; the spread of “happy-clappy” evangelism (at the expense of the more established churches and the more secularist traditions of, for instance, the SABC in the early post-apartheid period) – including all manner of quackery and fake “prophets-of-doom”; the resurgence of “identity” politics including, in rural areas, a resurgence of ethnic traditionalism, and even renewed life being breathed into narrow Africanist and BC discourses; the use of “muti” by AMCU-inspired

strikers, etc.

These are all signs of social distress, and they have destabilised the post-1994 political settlement, introducing deepening factional volatility within the ANC-led alliance, as well as breakaways from Cosatu and the ANC, and diminishing ANC electoral support – our own “crisis of representation”.

It is into this terrain that we have seen, also, the emergence of demagogic populist political projects:

- Some more “left” in form, and best exemplified by the EFF (although it is not alone); and
- The other essentially “conservative” and “traditionalist” in character (exemplified by the Gupta-captured network – the “premier league” (two of whose premiers cut their political teeth in Bantustan parties), the ANC YL and WL, the so-called MKVL, etc.)

Of course, “left” and “conservative” in this context are provisional terms. Both versions exhibit many of the same characteristics (cults of personality; pseudo “fancy-dress” militarism exemplified by “commander-in-chief” Malema on the one hand, and the MKVA “PEP-store camouflage” leadership on the other). Both versions flirt with an anti-white Africanism; both show little regard for the rule of law and the democratic Constitution; and both adopt anti-imperialist and anti [white] monopoly capital rhetoric. Both fish in the revivalist waters of a conservative Christian evangelism and both flirt with traditional leadership.

These similarities are not unrelated to the fact that much of the leadership of both currents emerged largely from the same political roots in what the SACP characterised as a post-Polokwane ANC “New Tendency” associated with aggrieved second generation aspirant BEE business-people and politicians side-lined during the Mbeki era.

There are differences between them however. EFF-style populism

has as its core social base alienated African youth in cities and small towns to whom a more left-styled rhetoric appeals. The core base of the parasitic populist tendency tends to be more rural, more conservative, slightly older, often social grant beneficiaries and others in clientelistic dependency relations with politicians and political slates. While both populist tendencies preach a gospel of “instant personal gratification”:

- The left tendency calls for this on behalf of popular strata (“land invasion”, a R12 5000 monthly national minimum wage for all workers, “free higher education now” for all students, etc.);
- The conservative tendency takes immediate, smash-and-grab personal gratification for themselves as a natural right (Nkandla, Gupta mining rights, Hlaudi’s bonuses) while preaching a gospel of patience and dependence to their “flock”. Church leaders are advised to “pray for us” rather than being involved in politics.

These differences then underpin a symbiotic relationship between the two populist currents, with the excesses of the one demagogically justifying the excesses of the other. Nkandla is used demagogically to argue for #Fees Must Fall Now. The brashness of the EFF is used to invoke a conservative back-lash, a “respect for authority”, and the abuse of the state’s security and intelligence forces.

Populism left and right – the battle of ideas and the role of the SACP

A critical vanguard role for the SACP in the present is to expose the ideological and programmatic demagogy of both populist currents. In particular, the Gupta-captured, “conservative” populism is engaged in an active fight-back ideological campaign within the ANC-led alliance and the Party. We need to systematically expose the hypocrisy of their arguments:

- When we attack Gupterialisation their counter-argument is “what

about the Ruperts and Oppenheimers?” – as if Gupta-isation of SARS, Eskom, Transnet strengthens the capacity of the state to deal with established monopoly capital;

- They claim to be “anti-imperialist” – as if illegal money laundering and expatriation of surplus to Dubai and other tax havens strikes a blow for national sovereignty;
- They say they are the victims of an imperialist “regime change agenda” directed from London, but their propaganda offensive, involving fly-by-night NGOs like Mngxitima’s “Black First Land First” and Mzwanele Jimmy Manyi’s “Decolonisation Foundation”, is run by the notorious, right-wing, UK-based, Bell Pottinger image consultancy;
- They claim that the imperialist “regime change agenda” is grounded in South Africa’s active participation in Brics. It is true that imperialist circles will not be happy with SA’s alignment with a Brics agenda, and it is also true that Brics provides a useful, potential counter-weight to an otherwise US-dominated unipolar world system. However, the progressive nature of Brics should also not be exaggerated. In the recent period in both Brazil and India, right-wing governments have taken power. Russia under Putin is not the Soviet Union and China has its own national priorities.

Populism and a liberal constitutional counter mobilisation

Both the “left” and “conservative” populist currents are increasingly reckless and, if left unchecked, are likely to result in a failed state scenario unfolding in South Africa. This is increasingly recognised by a wide array of South Africans. Over the past 12 months, since the removal of cde Nene as Minister of Finance in December 2015, and with almost daily new revelations of parasitic misbehaviour and with growing evidence of a parallel state operating outside of cabinet discipline

and outside parliamentary answerability, a broad wave of social mobilisation has gathered momentum, spanning mainstream churches, company CEOs, first generation BEE beneficiaries, and ANC stalwarts and genuine MK veterans, rallying around groupings like “Save South Africa”. The mobilisation is directed against certain venal forms of corporate capture (the Guptas) and many but not all of these forces are calling for President Zuma to step down.

The SACP has had a presence within some of this mobilisation and there has been explicit or tacit support from within parts of the ANC and from Cosatu. It is important that we continue to do so, to avoid a complete hegemony over this mobilisation by liberal or 1996 class project tendencies – without becoming factionalist ourselves.

The broadness of this mobilisation is a strength but also a weakness. The critique of the present reality tends to be largely moral, and framed within a liberal constitutionalism. It is often directed simply at personalities (important as that might be) without offering a clear analysis of how the ANC and the country descended into the current challenges, and without therefore providing a clear, radical transformational agenda.

This is the complex terrain on which the SACP has a critical role to play in refusing both populism and a return to neo-liberal “rule of law” constitutionality.

Energy

There are really very big issues in this space, and the SACP has been absent. This area is crucial in the transformation of our economy, apart from some of the mega projects that are planned. Yet we have a relative advantage to start engaging with all the issues here given the fact that the Portfolio Committee is chaired by a member of this CC, and another CC member was a minister in this portfolio, albeit briefly.

One of the most critical issues to be engaged relate to the whole issue of the energy mix of our country and the role and place of each of the components of this mix. For example, we have never debated the issue of nuclear energy as the SACP nor have we, for instance, see the future of coal and the huge reserves that South Africa has. There are also big debates on renewables, and generally the issue of energy is at the centre of the transformation of our economy and driving a second more radical phase of our revolution!

Water

South Africa is a water-scarce country, and this resources is vital for our livelihoods as well as a critical input into the economy. The sector is faced with huge challenges, including the threat of mining acid to our water resources. The SACP for instance may want to consider starting a campaign against mine water drainage and for the bosses to pay for this destruction.

Water also has very big projects in the pipeline, primarily the building of dams and these are a target of tenderpreneurs. We need organisation and mobilisation to ensure that these funds are not wasted or siphoned off. As the SACP we have also not participated in comprehensive campaigning around how to save water. There is talk also of considering desalination of sea water as part of mitigating the possibility of run out of clean drinking water.

The criminal justice system

Twenty-two years into our democracy, there are still huge challenges facing our criminal justice system. It is also a system whose parts have been abused at various times since our 1994 democratic breakthrough. The SACP has also been on the receiving end of some of the abuse by some in these institutions. There are also disturbing signs of securo-

cratic tendencies, with the increasing use of intelligence agencies to do dirty political work. The recent reports around the funding of a trade union to counter AMCU in the platinum belt, as well allegations that intelligence agents were used to monitor some staff members at the SABC.

The current state of many of our institutions in the Criminal Justice System is in a highly unsatisfactory state and their behaviour leave a lot to be desired, whether it be the Hawks, Ipid, parts of the police and in the National Prosecuting Authority, and its disastrous handling of the Minister of Finance. In short, we need to develop significant capacity to interact with this system, and we ignore it at our own peril. These institutions are also a prime target for being corrupted by the parasitic bourgeoisie as part of covering its tracks.

Building the capacity of the SACP – ‘socialism is the future, build it now’

In order to realise the key strategic objectives outlined above, we have to admit that as of now we do not have the necessary strategic capacity. The second more radical phase of our revolution cannot be realised unless it is underpinned by a strong SACP pursuing the objectives of its programmatic slogan ‘Socialism is the Future, Build it Now’. Radical economic transformation needs, from our standpoint, to be driven by the struggle to build elements of, momentum towards, and capacity for socialism. The driving of a second phase is in itself a terrain towards the realisation of some of the goals of our programmatic slogan.

Driving a second more radical phase will also require that we confront the stubborn and persisting realities of colonialism of a special type. It is therefore important that we place colonialism of a special type at the Centre of our key strategic thinking and objectives over the

next ten years.

A key strategic and programmatic task that still remains a crucial missing link is how to properly integrate gender and a gendered approach into the key strategic tasks and programme of the SACP. Part of dealing with this is that patriarchy and patriarchal practices and attitudes are a reality in our movement, including inside our own Party structures. Part of building strategic capacity of the SACP must include a conscious struggle to greatly enhance women participation in the Party at all levels and creative struggles and conceptualisation of non-sexism inside the ranks of our Party, our movement and the revolutions as a whole.

Having identified the key strategic challenges and tasks above, it is going to be important for the SACP between now and the first CC next year to convene discussions on building the strategic and organisational capacity of the SACP over the next ten years. This must aim at realising our strategic objectives. The Party Building Commission must produce a discussion document by the next Central Committee for discussion and approval as a discussion document towards the Congress. Over the years we have had many discussions over how to strengthen the SACP. What needs to be done now is not vastly different from discussions we have had before.

The SACP needs to strengthen itself organisationally at all levels. For instance, our head office needs to be professionalised, improve its work ethic and manage performance much more tightly. Our head office must be able to drive and co-ordinate national programmes and campaigns as well as effectively manage deployment of CC cadres to Party activities across the country. The provincial offices need to be strengthened along the same lines as national office and ensure organisational presence of the SACP in all parts of our provinces.

However the mainstay of building the strategic and organisational

capacity of the SACP must be strong district structures. We must have wall to wall district organisation and structures which must lead the building and servicing strong branch structures, drive local campaigns and ensure that the SACP is independently rooted amongst the people. All of our districts must have dedicated and resourced district organisers and offices. Political education and cadre development must be intensified at all levels but with particular attention being paid to the development of a solid commissariat at district level. The mainstay of Party organisation must be the district.

Over the next decade elaborate attention and resources must be paid to strengthening party branches and units where appropriate. The primary intention of making districts the mainstay of Party organisation is so that we can have structures supporting the building of strong Party branches and units. Our weakness continues to be the fact that overwhelmingly our branches are community based and we hardly have any workplace Party structures. We need to create these. In addition we must build Party branches in all of our university campuses and TVET colleges. These institutions, especially the universities are very important in the broader struggles of the battle of ideas.

Our head office and all our sub-national structures must also be strengthened to do sectoral organisation in order to ensure Party influence in a number of sectors. For example the SACP needs to build relations and its presence in the arts and sports, as well as create local reading, writing and performance clubs and initiatives. There is a glaring lack but space for left wing ideas and creativity in these spheres.

Lastly, but perhaps most importantly the next six months in the lead up to our Congress, we must use our discussion documents to make the Party and its socialist ideas felt throughout the country. We need to create a buzz and ideological impact as we move towards our Congress. We need to publicly release most if not all of our discussion documents

immediately after our February 2017 Central Committee. By end of April we need to convene a broader Imbizo of working class and community organisations to share some of our key documents and listen to the views of a variety of class forces on the Communist Party and its policies and thinking, as well as collectively discuss the challenges facing our revolution and how to confront them. We must use such a gathering as the launch of initiatives to start building a working class led popular movement.

As we move towards our 14th Congress our approach should be that our Party programme, the South African Road to Socialism still remains valid, but needs to be updated incorporating the strategic tasks of the SACP over the next 10 years. ●

Endnote

1. Cde Fidel Castro's May Day speech of 2000, delivered in Havana. It is now used as an oath for Cubans to sign up to, affirming their dedication to the revolution and Cde Fidel's ideals. It was signed by tens of thousands of people during the period of official mourning following Cde Castro's death last year